



Note of Meeting

Thursday, 7 March 2013

Summerhill Methodist Church, 5 Air Balloon Road, St George, Bristol

Present

Susan (Chair) Rob(WPO), Kit (Memb Sec) Jude (Cttee), Margaret (Cttee), Keith, Elaine, Stephen, Fabian (Cllr), Helen (minutes).

Apologies

Denise (BCC), Norman (Treas), Bryan (Cttee), Val, Steve (Pearce)

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved without amendment

Issues and thank yous for our Community Park Keeper, Area Parks Manager and Grounds Maintenance team

Bristol Council Parks Dept personnel had used the Skag machine to clear scrub, from the Hill during the preceding week as part of the regular programme of maintenance detailed in the Troopers Hill management plan.

The Leylandii trees formerly growing inside the Local Nature Reserve near Mama Bear's Nursery had been felled and removed but an accumulation of rubbish there and on the slopes above awaited clearing.

Works to the lower chimney (stack) were expected to start during April aiming to avoid frosty weather which prevents mortar setting properly. Scaffolding would be needed and some disruption to traffic would be likely but the full extent was not yet clear. While the scaffolding was up there would be an opportunity to retrieve and restore the old metal Troopers Hill Road street signs.

Susan reported that steeplejacks had been hired to inspect the chimney at the top of the Hill. They had succeeded in climbing up the chimney with the aid of ropes. They removed vegetation and any loose material. In addition, they had set markers to measure any structural movement. The photos and video that they took from the top of the chimney had provided excellent views of the surrounding area.

The meeting noted that certain dog walkers had been leaving quantities of kitchen roll. After a short discussion, it was considered that additional enforcement by dog wardens might be needed.

Action: Chair to contact Denise about a visit from dog wardens [dog awareness day arranged for 4 April 2013].

Troopers Hill Field path

Susan explained the section 106 funding mechanism. Work had started just over two weeks previously and tarmac laying was expected to begin soon. A concrete pad had been laid in preparation for a new bench to be installed at a later date. The meeting expressed appreciation of the new walking route.

Progress on the "Stepping Forward" grant - Experiencing Troopers Hill - funded by the Big Lottery and the Co-operative Community Fund.

Schools Project

Susan and Ruth Coleman had worked with school classes to produce a total of 92 designs, of which the best were selected for the trail marking project. The artist had ideas for securely fixing the plaques. The size and thickness of the metal was not thought to be sufficiently attractive to thieves but they might be vulnerable to determined vandals. Ruth had discussed the proposed locations of the plaques with the

artist and a further school visit was planned later in March to confirm them. Ruth was also developing an educational materials pack and had completed a version in draft.

A recent mention in the Press had stated that the Co-Op had given Friends of Troopers Hill a grant for 'plates'.

Kit and Stephen were expecting to work together on the Audio Trail project (downloadable mp3 file and QR code for mobile phones) over the forthcoming month, making recordings from contributors including Justin Smith, Ed Drewett, Tony Titchen and Rob Acton-Campbell. Rob and Susan reminded the meeting of all the expenditure items covered by "Stepping Forward" funding.

Marking the 10th Anniversary of Friends of Troopers Hill

The 10 year anniversary of FOTH was due to fall on 3rd December 2013. The meeting discussed options for marking the date, including 10 years of slides to illustrate Then and Now, Sad farewells, Happy arrivals etc at the AGM. It was decided that the anniversary would be marked at a Christmas celebration.

Work parties

Two Saturday morning work parties (2nd February and 2nd March) had been completed in the same management compartment since the last meeting. The March event had been joined by a group of Good Gym volunteers. Community Payback workers had cut some broom from among the heather and some of the cut broom had been removed.

Next work parties before the next meeting:

Saturday 6th April, 4th May tasks to include clearing cherry saplings, and removing ivy from rock faces in the gully (for the benefit of invertebrates and RIGGS reasons). Important to remember that the bird nesting season would be starting and scope of work restricted accordingly.

St George Strollers Walking for Health update

Kit has drafted the programme in time to be publicised at the Community Fair on 9 March. The budget for the group would run out at the end of June. . Susan had found three possible sources of funding including First bus, to cover bus fares refreshments and coach hire; a housing association linked to Weavers Mill; and potential for a contribution from a University Rag Week collection.

Kit reported that only one walk had been cancelled out of 40 so far and no walks had yet been repeated. Nearly every recent walk had attracted around 25 walkers. Five volunteer walk leaders were in place and another in prospect. There had never been a shortage of leaders for any walk. Stephen volunteered to bring his camera for the next walk on 20 March 2013 (Magpie Bottom, ending in the Jolly Sailor).

Events since our last meeting

Sunday 3rd February – Andrew Mathieson led a highly appreciated geology exploration of Troopers Hill which examined the formation of the rocks and nature of the sandstone, including fossil evidence of traces of coal.

Events Before our next meeting

Saturday 9th March: Community Fair at St Aidan with St George Church and church hall. The FOTH stand was due to be set up on the previous evening, with Kit and Helen & Norman maintaining a presence during the Fair. Lea would attend the Strollers stand.

Sunday 17th March: Dawn Chorus 6.30am, to be conducted by Ed Drewett, 13 people had booked places so far.

Friday 29th March - Good Friday Service – Friends were asked to volunteer for gazebo and gate opening duties during the service [subsequently cancelled because of very cold weather]

Sunday, 26th May a Tree Gazing Walk to be led by Tony Titchen. It was hoped that the tree labels would be ready in time for the event

An extra event - Bristol 99 to be led by Bristol Natural History Consortium, with sponsorship from Wild City and Western Power Distribution. The date had been confirmed for the afternoon of 26th May. The aim would be to identify and record as many naturally occurring species as possible. FOTH would provide gazebos and display boards. Rob explained more fully what the event would entail. A training event for volunteers was planned

Action: Susan to circulate training invitations and check availability of Bryan's van for transport on the day.

Friends had also been asked to assist with a dog show (sponsored by Beeses) at Eastwood Farm on Monday 1 April. Beeses had promised FOTH a donation over £300 to FOTH

Action: Rob to contact Lindy about a photo-opportunity at the cheque handover.

Facebook/Twitter/website update

Rob reported that he had successfully set up an automated Twitter account and members with numerous followers were re-tweeting the messages. He said it could be maintained without too much extra effort. The Facebook account had well over 200 friends.

Newsletter:

Kit expressed disappointment that Friends had not read/commented on the last issue.

Ideas for the next issue included the possibility of Commissioning articles from the audio trail contributors, and an article inviting contributions marking the 10th anniversary. Recipients to be asked to provide e-mail addresses if they no longer require a hard copy. Susan offered images from the new trails. The newsletter could also mention the neighbourhood partnership survey at Bristol.gov.uk/npask.

Any Other Business.

Susan drew attention to a survey request from a third-year occupational therapist seeking responses from green volunteers.

An event was being arranged on the evening of 20th March (to be confirmed) at Crofts End offering local residents an opportunity to express their views on Neighbourhood Partnerships.

It was confirmed that the 'Riverscapes' events leaflet would be produced in time for Easter.